



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
-----------------	-------------	----------------------	---------------------	------------------

10/720,581

11/24/2003

Robert L. Stone

RAP04 P-649A

6087

28101

7590

09/07/2006

VAN DYKE, GARDNER, LINN AND BURKHART, LLP

2851 CHARLEVOIX DRIVE, S.E.

P.O. BOX 888695

GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49588-8695

EXAMINER

BIDWELL, JAMES R

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3651

DATE MAILED: 09/07/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/720,581

Applicant(s)

STONE, ROBERT L.

Examiner

James R. Bidwell

Art Unit

3651

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 November 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-26 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 1-13 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 14-18 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 19-26 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 04/09/2004.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

Art Unit: 3651

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 14-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the prior art Figures 1-4 in view of Meyer (US 2001/0047922).

The prior art figures show everything except a tray position sensor that is spaced from the tray. Rather the prior art figures rely on a mechanical sensor. Meyer, however, shows sensors for determining if a tray is present to be filled by a chute. To use this type of sensor instead of a mechanical sensor would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art as this type of sensor is usually more precise in determining an exact tray position.

Re claim 15, the sensor is operable to detect a distance at a station.

Re claim 16, electronic sensors are disclosed.

Re claim 17, the sensor is fixedly mounted.

Claim 18 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the prior art figures in view of Meyer as applied to claims 14-17 above, and further in view of Gottlieb et al. (U.S. Patent 6,283,304).

The above combination does not have a sensor for detecting a fill level in a tray. However, shown by Gottlieb et al. is just such a sensor 22. To include a fill level sensor in a tray would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art as one inherently would need to know when a tray is full.

Claims 19-26 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 1-13 are allowed.

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: The prior art does not show nor fairly suggest placing a sensor of the non-mechanical variety onto a movable chute which sensor is operable to detect a fill level in a tray at a station.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to James R. Bidwell whose telephone number is (571)272-6910.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Gene O. Crawford, can be reached on 571-272-6911. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should

Application/Control Number: 10/720,581

Page 4

Art Unit: 3651

you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

JRB

08-29-2006

James R. Bidwell
JAMES R. BIDWELL
PRIMARY EXAMINER
GROUP 3651
8/29/06